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Abstract

This article explores the relationship between popular Hollywood and postcolonial masculinities, through the Maghrebi-French films *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Outside the Law* (2010). I focus on how the films foreground the place of Maghrebi-French men in France and French history, at the expense of women, by mimicking more popular and universally familiar versions of masculinity: namely, the gangster and the soldier. What does it mean when Fanon's (1961) 'new Algerian man' meets *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) and *The Godfather* (1972)? This question is answered through readings of the films that take into account the films' specific (anti)colonial histories and postcolonial presents, and their cultural intermediation between seemingly disparate gender and race paradigms. By exploring the ways in which these films reimagine French colonial histories of World War Two and the Algerian War of Independence, this article raises questions about the synchronistic appropriation of film genre that allows for subordinated and racialised masculinities to be both empowered by, and disruptive of, hegemonic forms of masculinity. Popular, in relation to cinema, is understood as commercial and accessible (Bergfelder, 2015; Faulkner, 2016), and thought of as a kind of 'taste' (Bourdieu, 1984) that appeals to broader publics with the cultural capital to engage with it, whilst the postcolonial, normally circulated in cinema networks associated with 'art' and the 'auteur', is characterized by financial and artistic independence, experimentation and niche audience markets. This article, through reading these films' construction and contestation of masculinities, analyses the productive tensions that emerge between popularly entertaining men and postcolonial political men, and asks how bringing them together might challenge dominant masculine forms, and disrupt boundaries between popular culture and the postcolonial more broadly.

Keywords: postcolonial; masculinity; maghrebi-french cinema; popular; film

Introduction

In Rachid Bouchareb's gangster-inspired anti-colonial epic *Outside the Law* (2010), eldest son Messaoud confesses his guilt to his mother. Kneeling at her deathbed in Nanterre, Paris, he reflects on what he has become through his role in the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962):

> I've killed people. A lot of people. With these hands. I strangled them. Mother… I strangled them. I was forced to do it. God is my witness. To give my son a better life. I did it all for him. I did it all for him. And, since then, I only know death. I only know death, Mother. Forgive me, Mother.

The close-up of Messaoud's increasingly anguished face, his missing eye hidden by the darkness on one side of the shot, encourages audience empathy with him, with both the dark and the light, the handsome and the ugly, sides of his face that complicate his violence and his masculinity. This contrast signals towards Messaoud's transformation in the film: from respected former soldier in the light, to troubled gangster in the dark. The masculinities at stake in the film are thus neither one nor the other, but represent a transformation of specific (post)colonial masculinities at the intersection with popular masculinist cinematic genre.

Therefore, this article interrogates the ways in which *Outside the Law* (2010), as well as Bouchareb's earlier combat-inspired *Days of Glory* (2006), draw upon and combine Hollywood masculine types with the specific production of masculinities in (post)colonial France and Algeria. Through detailed insights into two particular characters, one from each film, this article will demonstrate that Maghrebi-French men on screen embody and reject in various ways hegemonic masculinities within the colonial and anti-colonial spaces of the films. This paper therefore interrogates the ways in which the films actively deploy and re-appropriate popular masculinist film genre, shedding new light onto critical postcolonial relationships pertaining to tropes such as colonial violence, anti-colonialism, Mother country, rites of passage, father figures and infantilisation.

In doing so, I put forward the idea of popular postcolonial masculinities, drawing on and contributing to recent scholarship on what has been termed 'hybrid masculinities' (Coles, 2009; Arxer, 2011; Bridges, 2014; Bridges and Pascoe, 2014), which observes and cautions against the tendency of hegemonic masculinities to selectively appropriate marginalised gendered identities. In order to expand upon this literature, I propose that by drawing on

critical postcolonial notions of hybridity and masculinity (Fanon, 1961; Bhabha, 1984; Said, 1994), it is possible to consider a more productive hybrid masculinity, through which racialised masculinities are negotiated in colonial spaces of violence and shared experiences of war. Articulated using the 'imperial language' (Said, 1994) of popular Hollywood cinema, the marginalised postcolonial masculinities that are at the heart of beur cinema in France represent a potential challenge to the white man's authority over history and masculinity. By postcolonialising popular masculinities in this way, this article contributes more broadly towards exposing the contradictions and conflicts in hegemonic masculinity, and the unequal gendered and racialised structures of power that enable dominance over women and other categories of subordinated men.

Beur to Blockbuster

Set during World War Two, *Days of Glory* (2006) follows Algerian and Moroccan infantrymen from recruitment in North Africa onto the battlefields of Italy and France, centring the contributions made to the war effort by Arabs and Berbers fighting in Général de Gaulle's Free French Army. They fight a battle on two fronts however, combating not only the Nazi war machine, but colonial racism and discrimination within their own army. Bouchareb's sequel, American gangster-inspired *Outside the Law* (2010), tells the story of the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962) from the perspective of three immigrant brothers in Paris, each of whom fight and resist the French in their own way. It must also be noted, that Bouchareb uses the same actors in both films, with Roschdy Zem (Messaoud), Jamel Debbouze (Said), and Sami Bouajila (Abdelkader) playing characters with the same names in *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Outside the Law* (2010). Furthermore, director Rachid Bouchareb has more recently looked to the USA commercially and aesthetically, foraying directly into Hollywood with a trilogy of films: *Just like a Woman* (2012), starring Sienna Miller; *Two Men in Town* (2014) starring Forest Whitaker and Harvey Keitel; and *Belleville Cop* (2018) starring French actor Omar Sy.

Whilst it is well-established that Hollywood's cultural hegemony means that people all over the world are familiar with American films (Lukinbeal, 2004), and therefore use them as points of reference, France and French cinema have since the end of World War Two consciously resisted its reach (Buchsbaum, 2017), favouring their own unique cinematic style characterised by the auteur, art and transgression (Beugnet, 2007). However, director Rachid Bouchareb's appropriation of Hollywood conventions within his recent films *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Outside the Law* (2010), as well as their relative international success, reflects an

important aesthetic, commercial and cultural shift in French, as well as beur and Maghrebi-French, cinemas.

Coined in the 1980s, the term beur was deployed by young Arab men in France to refer to their interstitial position between France and North Africa, and to foster a new generational subjectivity that demanded to be recognised. This fed into the creation of a body of films concerned with articulating self-expression and community, whilst challenging rigid notions of French Republicanism and national identity. By the 1990s, beur cinema had established itself 'as a cinema of community identification' (Bloom, 1999: 472). As Tarr (2005: 3) has argued, 'films by and about beurs offer a touchstone for measuring the extent to which universalist Republican assumptions about Frenchness can be challenged and particular forms of multiculturalism envisaged and valued'. Beur cinema therefore became increasingly adept at dealing with, and countering dominant notions of and issues pertaining to, delinquency, coming of age, generational conflict and masculinity (Bloom, 1999). Departing from the first-generation protagonists and miserablist style which characterised 1970s émigré film (Higbee, 2013), beur cinema began to draw on popular French genres such as comedy, creating "desirable and streetwise male characters" (Tarr, 2005) in order to reach a more diverse "crossover" French audience. In making commercially viable films and achieving popularity beyond minority-ethnic audiences, one of the key challenges for beur filmmakers was the 'delicate negotiation... in exposing the negative treatment of Maghrebi-French youth, without adopting an excessively hostile stance towards a French society in which, ultimately, they have a stake' (Higbee, 2013: 11). Therefore, the aim of beur cinema was not necessarily to 'empower the beur' but rather, by the 1990s, to appeal to the 'liberal-critical conscience' (Tarr, 1993: 342). Moving towards a more Hollywood-influenced mainstream, epitomised by Bouchareb's most recent films, is unusual for filmmakers in France, and is therefore significant in a number of ways, as the cultural histories and conventions of Hollywood permeate how colonial histories are remembered, allowing neglected stories a wider reach, and offering possibilities for how new postcolonial relationships and masculinities are envisaged in the popular sphere.

It is also important to consider that Bouchareb's films *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Outside the Law* (2010) were released amidst growing tensions in the French banlieues. The language used by the Interior Minister at the time of the 2005 riots, Nicolas Sarkozy, and just prior to the release of *Days of Glory* (2006), referred to rioters as 'racaille' (scum), and called for the banlieues to be 'cleaned with a power hose' to rid them of the 'gangrene' that was mostly non-white and 'violent' young men (Mucchielli, 2009; Hussey, 2014). In October

2005, the death of two young boys in a Parisian suburb after being chased by police, sparked these riots across French cities. The boys hid in an electricity substation after 'instinctively' fleeing police on the way home from a football match, and were accidentally electrocuted to death. Three weeks of violence (Mucchielli, 2009) ensued in protest at the deaths, in which images of burning cars and buildings, and young men of the banlieue clashing with police, consistently rolled on television screens in France and beyond. Dubbed the 'French Intifada' (Hussey, 2014), media narratives intersected with Islamophobic discourses, conflating young male anger with Islamic 'uprising'.

Whilst responding to negative discourses around beur masculinity, Maghrebi-French filmmakers have done very little to combat the dominance of male protagonists in (post)colonial stories. Rather, filmmakers have sought ways to reshape the image of the beur male in France. As Tarr (1995; 2004; 2005) points out in her work on masculinities in beur cinema, there is a perceived need amongst beur and Maghrebi-French male filmmakers to tread carefully in representing disempowered masculinity, that seeks to make beur men more culturally visible in French society. In short, this means finding ways to present versions of beur and Arab masculinity that will be acceptable for White French audiences. Therefore, in situating these men in their historical and cinematic contexts, the films *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Outside the Law* (2010) can be seen to historicise the aforementioned troubled relationship between the French Republic and its male beur youth, and in drawing on Hollywood masculine types to do so, they represent a shift in cinematic approach to make beur men more visible, in new ways. The films therefore engage in cultural re-appropriation, the strategic process of which the next section addresses by engaging literature on hegemonic masculinities and Hollywood genre, and by taking this forward through postcolonial insights into recent research on 'hybrid masculinities'.

Popular Postcolonial Masculinities

Masculinities are unfixed, unstable and contested across different spaces and temporalities. This has been well established within studies that consider gendered identities as socially and culturally constituted (Connell, 1995; Kimmel, 1996; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Horschelmann and van Hoven, 2005; Gorman-Murray and Hopkins, 2014). Connell's (1995) influential concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' places emphasis on the actual patterns of practices amongst men, that ultimately foster sustained male dominance over women, whilst also highlighting the key sexual, class and ethnic differences of 'multiple masculinities'. Consequently, hegemonic masculinity has to defend, and compete for, its position of

dominance, in order to impose itself and create 'subordinate' men, as well as 'subordinated' women. Therefore, hegemonic masculinity relies not only on its subordination of women, but on hierarchical relationships with other men, with the 'global normative' (Connell, 1995) constructed as white, middle class and heterosexual.

Cinematic representations of masculinity, particularly through Hollywood, have of course been important in creating and framing the ways in which these discourses are made powerful, and through which expectations and conventions of 'real masculinity' (Aitken and Lukinbeal, 1997) are shaped. Two of the most dominant and enduring 'versions' of masculinity in the cinema have been the 'gangster' (Spicer, 2003; Gardaphé, 2006) and the 'soldier' (Eberwein, 2007; Donald and MacDonald, 2011), epitomized by films such as *The Godfather* (1972), *Once Upon a Time in America* (1984), *The Big Red One* (1980) and *Saving Private Ryan* (1998). These masculine types are not only presented as 'ideal models' for 'real men', but models to be re-appropriated and subverted by subordinated masculinities, producing new 'hybrid masculinities'.

Before I examine the literature on hybrid masculinities, let us consider how traits of hegemonic masculinity identified by Connell (1995) and through film (Clarke, 2006), such as leadership, heroism, bravery and brotherhood are positioned as normative in Hollywood cinema. 'Authentic' sequences in combat films for example, work to naturalise ideologies such as masculinity in an environment of war (Gates, 2005), often through narrative strategies such as the father-son relationship, and acts of violence as part of the coming of age ritual, through which masculinity is able to reproduce itself without the presence of women. The narrative of masculinist films, particularly combat and gangster genres, offer opportunities for anxieties about masculinity to be resolved. This is achieved through performances of strength and virility (Aitken and Lukinbeal, 1998) which work to assuage fears of instability and weakness. Whilst these genres and their masculinist archetypes are fluid, adapting in different social and political contexts, they have largely retained their whiteness over time. Therefore, whilst *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Outside the Law* (2010) reproduce, and crucially mimic, hegemonic gender norms in their narratives, they work to reveal the gendered white normativity of Hollywood masculinities.

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) recognised the need to consider hegemonic masculinity's continual state of change, and of particular interest in this article, the ways in which subordinated or marginalised masculinities can 'influence and challenge dominant forms' (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). In light of this critique, scholars have responded in conceptualising 'hybrid masculinities' (Arxer, 2011; Bridges, 2014; Bridges and Pascoe,

2014), highlighting the gendered and sexualized power dynamics between men, through which hegemonic masculinities are transformed, and ultimately empowered, through the 'selective incorporation' of elements from subordinated and marginalised masculinities, as well as perceived feminine (Messerschmidt, 2010) and non-white (Hughey, 2012) identity traits. Scholars have largely observed these patterns amongst mostly heterosexual, middle-class white men, in which their privilege allows them to be 'flexible' with their identities (Bridges and Pascoe, 2014). For example, Bridges (2014) addresses how heterosexual men defined aspects of their identities as 'gay', in order to distance themselves from the less desirable aspects of masculinity, whilst retaining 'a "masculine" distance from homosexuality' (Bridges, 2014: 59). The hybrid masculinities scholarship thus far, therefore argues that hegemonic masculinities largely perpetuate and reproduce gender inequality (Bridges and Pascoe, 2014), actually increasing domination over others through the appropriation of alternative masculinities (Arxer, 2011).

Through readings of the films *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Outside the Law* (2010), this article reveals the possibilities for cultural *re*-appropriation, in which historically marginalised men and masculinities draw upon and adapt traits and codes associated with hegemonic masculinities. Coles (2009) similarly emphasises the need to examine the contestations between men, paying attention to the ways in which subordinated men find ways to subvert and challenge their marginalised position in drawing on, and assuming, dominance. In contributing to this emerging trend of masculinities scholarship, Maghrebi-French masculinities are shown to be articulated and constituted through discourses of race, in colonial spaces, and in relation to hegemonic white masculinities, exemplified cinematically by Hollywood male genre types, namely the gangster and the soldier.

Drawing on the notion of the 'hybrid' in relation to masculinities in Maghrebi-French films demands a consideration of the postcolonial. Issues of mimicry, syncretism and (re)appropriation occupy central tensions at the heart of the films examined in this article. As a key concept in postcolonial studies, the notion of hybridity is generally used to describe the 'mixing' of people and cultures, which for Bhabha (1984) resists fixity and signals to the fluidity of identity, culture and nation, producing subjectivities that are 'neither one nor the other', but 'something new' and 'in-between'. Edward Said (1994) similarly argues that in resisting forms of cultural imperialism, the decolonising writer 're-experiences, adopts, re-uses and re-lives' in order to both self-assert and challenge the myth of purity. In the case of Maghrebi-French cinema, using, exploring and playing with genre results in the potential deterritorialisation of French identity, avoiding definitive categorisation and resisting the

demands of assimilation, using the language of the powerful (in this case film genre) to have their voices heard.

Furthermore, as its critics have noted (Brah and Coombes, 2000), the concept of hybrid formations between cultures often relies on the perceived pre-existence of two distinct and therefore 'essentialised' cultures, hybridised only upon encounter with one another. It is therefore crucial that any engagement with it must be considered in its particular environment, in which the circumstances of its cultural formation, and its effects, are specifically addressed. In their mimicry of Hollywood gangster and combat masculinities, Bouchareb's films attest to the possibility of a strategic mimicry of popular masculinistic film genre which, in Bhabha's (1984: 127) words, represent the potential of both 'resemblance and menace'. This is to say that the masculinities in the films can be seen as the same, 'but not quite', which necessitates asking whether they succeed in disrupting and perhaps uncovering colonial and/or hegemonic structures, or whether they invert them, in a resemblance that is suggestive of the colonised man internalising his colonial inferiority. Bouchareb's films can be seen as a menacing intervention, posing a threat to the almost exclusively white masculinist identity of popular gangster and combat cinema and the hegemonic masculinities they imaginatively shape.

Outside the Law's (2010) Anti-Colonialist Gangster

> Violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect
> (Fanon, 1961: 94).

Both the gangster and the anti-colonialist fighter are defined by their positions within contested social environments, where criminal activity and violence are crucial to the pursuit of transgressive and empowering versions of masculinity (Fanon, 1961; Gardaphé, 2006). As a genre centred on men, the gangster film predictably relegates women, and negotiates masculinity almost exclusively between men in an environment of 'masculine testing' (Krutnik, 2006). It is important to note that the Hollywood gangster genre here differs from 'gangsta' or 'hood' films (Masood, 1996), through which stories are told specifically of the African-American 'urban' experience. The Hollywood gangster film on the other hand, particularly associated with Italian-American 'mafia' (see Gardaphé, 2006), typically focuses on a somewhat tragic outlaw with whom audiences are encouraged to identify, and

characterised narratively by the gangster's gradual rise and sharp fall in his transgressive pursuit of wealth and status, and in his conflict with authority. Whilst its archetypal traits have adapted over time, and in different social and political contexts, these narrative conventions remain popular, as do the genre's classical iconographic features, such as the use of very dark colours and low-level lighting in the mise-en-scene, as well as its use of urban settings, and props such as formal clothing, money and cars (Gardaphé, 2006; Krutnik, 2006). Key to the constitution of masculinity in *Outside the Law* (2010) is the specific reframing and resignification of racialised anti-colonial masculinities through the lens of popular American gangster genre. For the three Algerian brothers in the film, Abdelkader the intellectual leader of the National Liberation Front (FLN), Said the pimp and boxing promoter, and Messaoud the military commander turned anti-colonialist fighter, their different roles within the film demonstrate the malleability of postcolonial masculinity when re-framed through popular gangster genre. Focusing specifically on Messaoud Souni, I will argue that the film works to re-signify the political justifications for anti-colonialist violence, and therefore imaginatively reshape postcolonial masculinity.

Prior to becoming an FLN 'gangster', Messaoud serves as a soldier in the French Army in its war to retain Indochina, rising to the rank of Commander. A humiliating defeat for the French, Vietnamese independence in 1954 signalled the beginning of the end for the French Empire (Stora, 2004) and, in the film, forces Messaoud to return to his family, not in Algeria but to their new home in the Nanterre bidonville (shantytown), just outside Paris, France. Injured and captured by the Viet Minh, Messaoud is reunited with his mother and brothers, arriving at the family home in his military uniform and brandishing a severe wound where his left eye once was. His younger brother Said is impressed by his uniform, medals and the phallic insignia, as he casually shrugs off 'just the war', maintaining a tough persona in public. His mother, feeling insecure and unprotected by her youngest son, the 'bandit' Said from whom she refuses to accept money, his presence back in her life re-fortifies the family unit. Inside the 'temporary' hut the family call home, Messaoud and his mother are framed sitting at the table in a static shot, in which the camera does not move around or cut away, remaining continuously on mother and son, reflecting the apparent stability and security brought to the domestic space by Messaoud. She gently instructs him to fulfil his role as a father and husband, and to retain the expected gender norms regardless of the social disruption and displacement brought by war and exile. In addition to commenting on the masculine roles being fashioned out for the Algerian man, it is also important to highlight, in line with Donadey's (2016) critique of the film, in that instead of representing the many

Algerian women who fought and participated in the War of Independence (see Vince, 2015), the mother is reduced to the upholder of traditions, and enforcer of fixed gender roles.

However, despite his mother's efforts to preserve the traditional family unit, and thus maintain Messaoud's normative position as provider and protector, their geographical and cultural displacement heightened by the violent conflict with the French threatens this particular route to securing his masculine identity. MacMaster (2012: 36) highlights this 'crisis for Algerian male virility', caused by the 'temporary' destabilisation of traditional gender roles brought on by the scale and ferocity of the violence. These challenges do not prevent Messaoud from marrying Zohra, nor do they prevent him becoming a father, as Zohra bears him a son shortly after their marriage. His commitment to the FLN and his other brother Abdelkader, who leads the fight in France, does however impede on his abilities to maintain a relationship with his wife and new born son. The first intrusion of the violence of the war can be seen at their wedding, in which the police raid the bidonville, prompting an angry outburst from Messaoud. Most telling with regards to the tension between family and masculine virility however, is Abdelkader's rallying of male support for his cause after the police attack them. He appeals directly to the men of the bidonville, deliberately tapping into their anxieties about being able to 'defend their women and children' from the French. He succeeds, and the following day scores of men sign up to the FLN pledging to pay the revolutionary tax and to join the fight.

Fighting is not simply a way of defending and restoring the conservative values of the family, and the masculine role of protector that is dependent on its stability, but for Fanon (1961) it is fundamental to recovering the male identity diminished by colonialism, and battered in the protracted battle against it. Violent resistance is therefore inevitable, and it does not simply emerge from a rational desire for nationhood, but from the male body itself and 'the tonicity of the muscles' (Seshadri-Crooks, 2002: 91). In order to maintain focus on this Fanon-inspired dilemma Messaoud's brother Abdelkader emotionlessly dictates to him that there is no room for family in this war, contradicting his earlier rallying cry to the fragile virility of impoverished Algerian men.

As a gangster genre film, or as a film that heavily draws on its classic style, iconography and conventions, this tension for Messaoud between family and the fight is important for the 'identity-challenging loss' (Gardaphé, 2006) he suffers. In one of the earliest lines from the ultimate cinema gangster, Don Vito Corleone, in *The Godfather* (1972) declares: 'A man who doesn't spend time with his family can never be a real man'. This sense of loss, specifically emasculation or as Fanon (1961) more radically interprets it,

‘castration’, is recognised as a momentum that propels both the anti-colonialist’s transformation from ‘victim to sheer force of power’ (Seshadri-Crooks, 2002), and the gangsters strive for power and control over their lives. Messaoud’s identity-challenging loss is felt indirectly. It is caused primarily by the constraints and pressures put on him by the FLN itself, particularly its leader, his brother Abdelkader. Therefore, *Outside the Law’s* (2010) account of emasculation, and reinvented anti-colonial masculinity, paints a picture in which men are prevented from fulfilling normative masculine roles in society, because of an honour-bound duty to their brothers-in-arms. This ‘temporary’ barrier to his virile role as masculine protector, must be, according to Fanonian conceptions of the ‘new Algerian man’, and the conventions of the gangster genre, overcome at all costs by Messaoud.

The gendered concerns that characterise Messaoud situate him, and *Outside the Law* (2010) more generally, within a broader cultural paradigm of masculinities, working to disavow persistent sexual anxieties that are pronounced in colonial Algeria, and one that finds parallels in the real-world context of the contemporary banlieue described earlier. What Fanon (1961) describes as the ‘muscular tension’ fostered by the ‘native man’s’ emasculation and masculinised humiliation, though caused directly in this case by his own comrades, must be ‘released’ via ‘expressive action’ (Seshadri-Crooks, 2002). To resist this call to arms would result in further ‘cowardice and dishonour’ (Nagel, 1998). It is precisely cowardice and dishonour that Messaoud is being asked to root out of the Algerian community, as he directs his violence not only towards the French, but also towards those Algerian men who are not fully committed to the cause of Independence. The ‘libidinal core’ of anti-colonial violence and resistance thus breaks down the conventional codes of morality, legitimated by the assault of colonialism on the ‘gendered norms of the body’ (Seshadri-Crooks, 2002). Returning to Messaoud then, if, as Don Corleone suggests, he ‘can’t be a real man’ because he ‘doesn’t spend time with his family’, how is he to remedy this deficiency? As an anti-colonialist Algerian ‘gangster’ characterised by his ‘humble origins and stylish dress’, wielding his power with ‘sexuality and guns’, and situated in a ‘racially charged context’ (Gardaphé, 2006), Messaoud, in the second half of the film, appears in scenes characterised by hyper-masculine and spectacular displays of violence to the point of excess.

Messaoud’s public displays of violence are not only motivated by a libidinal charge to assuage internal angst about his male identity, but also by a basic loyalty to his brother Abdelkader, by desires to avenge the colonialist violence done to his family, and perhaps in his most important departure from the classic gangster, to achieve independence for his country and therefore secure the future of his young son. The saturation of his sequences of

gun fights with gangster iconography then, in this particular postcolonial context of the Algerian War of Independence, is inseparable from the power dynamics of the relationship between coloniser and colonised. Crucially in this case, the French police in *Outside the Law* (2010) are not typical American cops, but are specifically empowered by the right-wing-influenced and government-sanctioned terrorist organisation The Red Hand, who are charged with eliminating and terrorising the FLN in Paris.

It is the combination of these multiple justifications that drags Messaoud into a spiral of violence and leads him to confess his guilt to his mother, as described at the beginning of this article. The family matriarch serves solely to support her sons, and in the sequence in which her eldest son Messaoud confesses to her, she is a silent and forgiving repository used to justify his violent actions. This confession scene fills with symbolic meaning his exposure and framing in the spectacular gun fights. Stylistically, the 'light' in which Messaoud was shrouded in the earlier scenes when still wearing his military uniform contrasts with the 'dark' sequences of gangster violence that follow.

Nowhere is his performance more excessive than in the final shootout of the film. After smuggling automatic weapons into France from West Germany, the police are informed of the FLN's location and move to ambush Messaoud and the other FLN fighters. Overwhelmed by their numbers and firepower, many of the FLN fighters are killed or forced to retreat, leaving Messaoud to stand up to the police largely by himself with nothing but a handgun. Standing in between two period Simca cars pockmarked by bullet holes, framed again in the dark of night, yet faintly illuminated by the glow of car headlights, Messaoud looks stylishly like a Hollywood gangster, and typically strong and brave, traits associated with both gangster and anti-colonial masculinities. Remaining true to the gangster narrative proves to be Messaoud's downfall, since he is shot on retreating with Abdelkader and dies in the car of his brother Said who has come to their rescue, uttering 'tell Mother, my wife and my son. Tell them to forgive me'.

Messaoud's death however, unlike a gangster's death which typically results from his self-indulgent life-style and individualistic rise to power, is an act of selfless sacrifice to protect his brother, and as he himself insists on several occasions, a Free Algeria for his only son. We can therefore locate *Outside the Law's* (2010) representation of violence, through the particular character of Messaoud, at the nexus of anti-colonialism and Algerian nationalism, and their relation to a masculinistic identity-formation that is inspired by the American gangster genre. Whilst such a framing of violence in the film works to contextualise and empower the beur youth of the contemporary French banlieues, it further functions to situate

both that contemporary unrest and French-Algerian colonial history within a popular genre that has historically reflected anxieties about, and transformations of, masculinities (Gardaphé, 2006). The film mimics traits of the American gangster film in ways that transform Messaoud, deflecting his violent trajectory in relation to male identities informed by the American gangster genre, and through which it is possible to distinguish the different political justifications for and complexities of anti-colonialist violence. Therefore, the film's play on genre is suggestive of the possibilities of a different kind of 'hybrid masculinity' that speaks back to power. Appropriating the most dominant and enduring cultural traits of American gangster cinema, and incorporating elements of Fanon's political thinking that empower marginalised men, Bouchareb's *Outside the Law* (2010) shines a light on neglected colonial histories.

Days of Glory's (2006) Infantilised Colonial Soldier

> The soldier hero has proved to be one of the most durable and powerful forms of idealised masculinity within Western cultural traditions since the time of the Ancient Greeks (Dawson, 1994: 1).

If, in *Outside the Law* (2010), Messaoud's overbearing masculinity, supported by his anti-colonialist stance and gangster framing, is never really put into question, in *Days of Glory* (2006), Said's subdued masculinity is constantly threatened and so much derided that he must set out to prove his identity as a man from the very start. For Jamel Debbouze's small and boyish character, the army and the battlefield function as spaces of transition for his masculinity, a process of initiation in which he is hoping to climb the social ladder and grow from being in Said's words, a boy of 'total poverty' in Algeria, to becoming a man of status in France. For the other characters in the film, these spaces present different opportunities and challenges for masculine identity as aspiring colonel, Abdelkader, views the Army not just as a chance to prove himself worthy as a Frenchmen, but rather naively as a vehicle for racial equality amongst men, whilst tough marksman, Messaoud, finds love with a white French woman and envisions France as a place he can call home. Therefore, the combat genre conventions serve different roles for different characters in the film, and take on new meaning in this specifically (post)colonial milieu. The transformative possibilities of the Army and the battlefield as 'rite of passage' however, are not realised for Said, and his journey is largely one of failure of passage, of not-yet becoming a man. Owing to his failed

transformation, Said occupies an ambiguous role in the film's narrative, situated between the colonial discourses on the feminised and infantilised Algerian, often manifesting in his relationship with his pied-noir Sergeant, and the anti-militaristic embodiment of the innocent and boyish soldier of World War Two.

Academic research on soldier masculinities (Dawson, 1994; Eberwein, 2007; Donald and McDonald, 2011) has suggested that war texts of different kinds tend to represent the same conventionally 'manly and unmanly behaviours', codes and values that serve to develop and influence masculinities. For Dawson (1994), for example, soldier 'heroes' take shape imaginatively through what he refers to as 'adventures' of war, in which 'military virtues' such as aggression, strength, courage and endurance are pictured as easily attainable. For centuries, young men fascinated by war have been consuming and sharing stories and images of war, 'through which their own masculinity could be imaginatively secured' (Dawson, 1994: 4). Traditional gendered types have been socially constructed, not just in films, and largely produced to encourage emulation. They have been set against unconventional gendered types, which must be avoided, and contrast strongly with the 'ideal' types. In times of war, the Army serves as an 'initiation rite' (Mahdi et al, 1987), through which young men can learn and become 'manly' or fail to learn and remain 'unmanly' (Donald and McDonald, 2011), resulting in a 'failed' masculinity, subsequently equated with femininity.

However, the systems of gendering that are at stake in *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Outside the Law* (2010) are inflected by racialised regimes of power. Situated in its specific colonial context, and released in France at a time of perceived crisis for beur masculinities, *Days of Glory* (2006) opens up the possibility of interrogating more closely the constitution of beur and Maghrebi-French masculinities at the crossroads of colonialism and World War Two, and in relation to hegemonic masculinities, in this case represented through Said's father-son relationship with his white pied-noir Sergeant. This has implications for the conceptualisation of hybrid masculinities, as the cinematic synthesis of gendered colonial discourses and popular combat genre in *Days of Glory* (2006) reframes emasculated and victimised men, endowing the colonial soldier (see Smith, 2004; Maghraoui, 2014) with the power to resist and eradicate colonial dependency.

The opening scene of *Days of Glory* (2006) sets up the narrative as one of masculine opportunity, as the local caïd walks through Said's small Algerian hometown encouraging the men to reach out to France and enlist in the Free French Army to 'liberate her'. The Army, and the War, are opportunities for the boys to become men, the Saviours of a Mother in distress: France. Some scholars have noted the film's representation of the soldiers voluntary

enlisting, as opposed to 'conscription' (Hargreaves, 2007; Coly, 2008; Higbee, 2013), criticising the film for its omission of 'the forced and often violent mobilisation of colonial African troops' (Coly, 2008: 98). This forced and violent conscription, however, does not have to conceal the equally interesting phenomenon of voluntary enlisting, that Bouchareb chose to highlight in *Days of Glory* (2006) but which critics have been quite reticent to explore so far. By showing the colonial soldiers who enlisted and, more specifically, by focusing on a handful of personal stories of men who 'wanted' to fight for France, Bouchareb's narrative of the Algerian soldier conscientiously eschews the stereotype of the emasculated victim.

Responding to the call-to-arms comes Said, framed solitarily in a darkened alleyway separate from the long line of eager men that follow the caïd. Demonstrating his isolation from the male group, he walks slowly without any real conviction towards the off-screen group of men who can be heard in the distance, when he is overtaken by a young and eager boy rushing keenly to join the commotion. Here, already, there is a question asked not just about his masculinity and his 'manliness', which might have been expressed through a macho performance of brave and enthusiastic enlistment, but of his maturity and adulthood as the young boy sweeps past him. This sense of infantilisation is further emphasised as his mother calls him back, pleading with him not to go to war, concerned that he will not return safely to her. His response, 'don't worry about me, mother. I can manage', signals his conscious desire to 'become a man' by going to war, to prove not just his manliness but his successful transition to adulthood, to independence from his mother as a man of status in France. This introduction to the character sets up the expectation that Said is going to struggle in the theatre of war, and resonates with many narratives that audiences are accustomed to in Western and Hollywood cinemas about the plight of young, boyish and untrained men being sent off to die on the battlefields of Europe. However, the tragic futility of young men fighting wars abroad takes on different meanings here, as the transition from childhood to adulthood is inflected by French colonialism, the ensuing emasculation of the Algerian man, and his determination to reclaim and reassert his independent masculinity.

The first stage of Said's transition from mummy's boy to soldier man is a test of his 'manliness' at a training camp in Italy, in which the film's ensemble cast is first brought together. Whilst the groups' marksman, Messaoud, demonstrates his phallic strength with the expert use of a rifle, Said makes a disastrous attempt to take the grenade hanging from his shirt as instructed by his Sergeant, Martinez, since he detonates it in the process. As Martinez throws the grenade away at a safe distance before it explodes, then hits Said in the groin with

the butt of his gun, Said retains a naïve and boyish look on his face. His failure to simply handle a small grenade is juxtaposed with the calm and controlled handling of the huge weapon fired by Messaoud, who passes the test of his soldier masculinity with flying colours, whilst Said fails miserably. Nonetheless, the 'test of masculine endurance' (Donald and MacDonald, 2011) in general, will occur not in training but on their first battle. Taking cover from machine-gun fire, the platoon led by pied-noir Sergeant Martinez are pinned down behind a rock. After exchanging a look with his Sergeant, Said takes the grenade, the weapon that threatened his masculinity in training, bites the pin out and successfully kills the German machine-gunner, enabling the men to progress and win the battle. Under the watchful eye of his new father-figure Martinez, Said begins to overcome that particular threat to his soldier masculinity: the inability to wield a weapon. His demonstration of masculine endurance leads him to become Martinez's man-servant, or 'ordonnance'. I will come back later to the importance of this relationship, between colonised man Said and pied-noir Sergeant Martinez, to explain how Said constructs or de-constructs his masculinity vis-à-vis Martinez.

The soldiers' reward for their victory in Italy is to 'go home', to France. In Provence, the men celebrate with local people, and Said ends up boasting of his part in their victorious battle to a young White French woman. The brief conversation of Said and the French woman is framed in a series of reverse high and low angle shots that position the French woman above Said, perched on the back of a truck. Whilst the high-angle shot frames Said beneath the white woman, emphasising his relatively small size and accentuating the power relations between the two of them, Said is heard to brag about his heroic killing of the machine-gunning Germans. As he goes on telling her, 'I free a country, it's my country', she grabs his hand, looks into his eyes with a smile on her face, and responds flirtatiously, 'your country's all you like?'. However, he completely misses the sexual innuendo, and replies formally, 'Inch'Allah, we'll beat Germany. Thank you very much'. As he takes leave of her, she looks, quite understandably, disappointed and even rejected. This mise-en-scène of Said reveals that power relations and racialised hierarchies are constructed along axes of gender and sexuality (see Sinha, 1995; and Puar, 2007). In combat films, it is expected that men, particularly when liberating a place or coming 'home', will be seen chasing women. Said's awkward exchange with the woman, by uncovering the racial power dynamics at play, contradicts orientalist discourses on Arab and Muslim masculinities which are represented as sexually deviant and preying on white women (see Shaheen, 2001). The 'failed' encounter does, however, pose a further threat to Said's dream of soldier hero, with all his virility,

strength and heterosexuality. The issue is not that he *cannot* win a woman, but that he lacks the *desire* to do so.

This brings me back to the way in which Said's masculinity is constructed and de-constructed, not by his interactions with women, but rather by his relationship with Sergeant Martinez. Sedgwick's (1985) influential work on what she calls 'homosocial desire' posits that men develop supportive bonds with one another that reinforce their masculinity, through their shared desire for a woman. Since there is no such woman between them, their close relationship earns Said the nickname of Aicha from his peers, as they mock him for being the Sergeant's pet. As with the 'Motherland' herself, Said could be said to represent the feminised object in their relationship.

Despite the taunts, Said remains close to Martinez. Still, as his earlier interaction with the French woman anticipates, Said's relationship with his pied-noir superior is also far from being placed on equal terms, and develops to reveal feelings of fear and revulsion. It becomes clear that the masculinity of White settler (or 'pied noir') Martinez is involved in and dependent on the subordination of other men (see Sinha, 1995), since it is built on a differentiation from the Arab man. This clear dichotomy between White and Arab is put into question as Said discovers a photograph of Martinez' Arab mother in the Sergeant's shirt pocket. Martinez brands him as 'scum', which resonates with the rhetoric that Interior Minister Sarkozy used for the 2005 riots. Martinez is not only made vulnerable by this racialised 'dirtiness', but also by an impingement on his masculinity, which materialises itself as Said tries to forge a homosocial bond through their Arab mothers. In forcing Martinez to confront his 'métissage', he is violently rejected by him, and told he will be killed should his Arab mother be mentioned again. Said has not only failed, according to the norms of genre, in his encounter with a French woman, but also failed in creating a successful homosocial bond through which he could have made his masculinity more secure.

Martinez's reaction to anxieties inherent to his White settler masculinity may also be an ominous sign of his decline. *Days of Glory* (2006) is haunted by the spectre of the Algerian War of Independence, following which hundreds of thousands of pied-noirs left Algeria for France (see Eldridge, 2010). Whilst there is not the scope in this article to fully explore pied-noir masculinities, it is clear that Martinez holds some importance in Said's personal battle for independence. This is demonstrated as the regiment is later ambushed in The Vosges mountains in North-East France, with Sergeant Martinez being critically injured in the attack, and carried over to his last battlefield by the other men. Said visits him on his

deathbed in Alsace where the regiment await reinforcements, and declares solemnly: 'I hope you die'. After this catharsis, and having learnt from their previous dispute when Martinez rejected Said's attempt at connecting through their shared ethnic heritage, it is possible for Said to break free from his master, and take his place alongside his brothers-in-arms in the final spectacle of the film. During his last battle, he successfully wields weaponry and fights like his comrades. In an expressive montage, he is pictured clutching and aiming his gun like the other men, his phallic weaponry attesting to his manliness in the spectacle of war.

At the very end, however, Said, concerned with Sergeant Martinez' welfare, and fearing for his own life, dodges bullets and bombs to reach the room where Martinez lies dying. Having rushed to his bedside while the firefight with the German Army is still going on, he wilfully spends his final moments alongside his Sergeant. In this futile bid to rescue Martinez and carry him outside the house, they are both killed by a rocket-launcher fired at close-range, and the pair is left lying side-by-side, their hands almost touching. Said's returning to his racist Sergeant undoes the work he has accomplished to prove his worth on this last battlefield, and make his masculinity comply with what is expected from him in a combat genre film. Still, on the plus side, he shows a tenderness towards another man, which is permitted in such homosocial arrangements (Sedgwick, 1985), and it is this homosocial affection that effectively binds pied-noir and Algerian masculinities. At that point in history, the infantilised Algerian man, represented by Said, fails to free himself from his reliance on his master.

Bouchareb's *Days of Glory* (2006) appropriates the masculine tropes of the combat film genre in order to comment upon the ways in which colonialism is gendered. While the colonising master ends up developing a dependency on his freed slave, the colonised man seems to remain momentarily unable to disavow threats to his masculinity and sexuality, and to free himself completely. Said's is not only a story about 'failed' masculinity. It is a complex narrative representing the 'unmanly' man who will succeed in leading, but falls short of being completely independent or, in other words, fails in 'not leaving behind' the colonising master. Said's masculinity is distinct from the masculinities present in conventional combat films, and is tied up to its (post)colonial context. From the viewpoint of the White coloniser, the codes and values emerging from this type of narrative are to be avoided rather than emulated (Donald and MacDonald, 2011). Said's masculinity has not yet broken its chains, but the White settler has now become dependent on its ultimate freedom for the survival of his own.

Conclusion

> Decolonization is quite simply the replacing of a certain 'species' of men by another 'species' of men (Fanon, 1961: 35).

This article has argued that subordinated Maghrebi-French men, situated in-between historical colonial environments and contemporary racialised contexts, are transformed by incorporating traits of dominant and hegemonic masculinities. It has been argued that in drawing on Hollywood gangster and combat genres, which have since their inception been repositories for post-war angst about the 'crisis of masculinity', the men of the films attempt to endow themselves with power and resist victimisation. Therefore, Bouchareb's films, *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Outside the Law* (2010) are able to foreground the place of Maghrebi-French men in France and beyond by mimicking more popular versions of masculinity. By paying attention to the potentially productive and transgressive ways in which representations of racialised masculinities can be empowered through the re-appropriation and subversion of typically-masculine film genres, I contribute to a more expansive understanding of 'hybrid masculinities' (Bridges and Pascoe, 2014), the geographies of which are revealed to be imaginatively produced and contested. In combining recent scholarship on masculinities (Arxer, 2011; Bridges, 2014; Bridges and Pascoe, 2014; Gorman-Murray and Hopkins, 2014) with geographies of film (Aitken and Lukinbeal, 1998; Lukinbeal, 2004) and postcolonialism (Bhabha, 1984; Said, 1994), this article demonstrates how paradigms of gender and race are shaped, exposed and challenged in place, and marginalised identities cinematically constructed in multifaceted cultural exchanges through shared, though unequal, historical experiences.

Specifically, Messaoud's masculinism in *Outside the Law* (2010) illustrates how an anti-colonialism concerned with the rehabilitation of Algerian masculinity can be given new life in merging with American gangster film and pursuing some transgressive versions of masculinity. Said's masculine identity in *Days of Glory* (2006) is situated within tales of World War Two and Hollywood combat films, spaces of transition where boys become men. These transitional spaces are used to foreground how popular narratives of war actually show the different ways in which colonialism is gendered. *Days of Glory* (2006) deploys the common 'rite of passage' trope of the combat film, transforming it into a postcolonial 'rite of passage' for the eradication of colonial dependency and the birth of a better 'species' of men.

Largely departing from the standard depiction of the disempowered (and victimised) men of the banlieue, Bouchareb's *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Outside the Law* (2010) cloak their Muslim men in the white dress of Hollywood genre types, with meaningful differences linked to the colonial contexts in which they are framed. Tarr (2005) has suggested that beur cinema, when making beur men 'more visible', has always avoided the construction of masculinities that could be perceived as threatening by predominantly White audiences. Bouchareb's mainstream movies continue to 'tread carefully' in this sense, the masculinistic identity-formation of his male Algerian characters infusing the marginalised and emasculated Algerian man with the virility and strength traditionally associated with the White hegemonic men of gangs and armies. By reframing his male characters in recognisable ways however, Bouchareb's 'popular' cinema remains disruptive and subversive, and the postcolonial masculinities he creates move closer to the centre, displacing the White man's monopoly on history and hegemonic masculinities (Connell, 1995; Bridges and Pascoe, 2014). Masculinities are produced in relation to one another, through cultural and cinematic negotiations of simultaneously conflicting and interrelated paradigms of masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Bridges and Pascoe, 2014). This article has further illustrated that the intercultural 'merging' or 'fusion' that makes these new masculinities possible on the big screen contributes to conceptions of hegemonic yet hybrid masculinities – to the conception, in short, of a freer species of men.

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